

Fruitless Negotiations with Philip.

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Nor had the departure of the cardinal infused efficacy or harmony into the Council of State. The Orange party was opposed by the party of the Cardinalists, of which Berlaymont and Viglius were the leaders. Philip was not disposed to trust the men who had foiled his plans for the moment, and who pestered him with reform plans tending still further to thwart his autocratic policy. Orange desired to summon the States-General, to enlarge the Council of State, and augment its authority in the interests of better government, which, under Granvelle, had been corrupt to the core, to moderate, if not abolish, the edicts. With these demands, which he emphasised in a very pointed speech to the Council, Egmont was ultimately despatched to Spain in the beginning of 1565. Egmont was a dashing cavalier, but he made a poor envoy. He was as vain and shallow as he was brave and impulsive. The flatteries lavished by Philip and his ministers on the great cavalry general fairly turned his head, and after being feasted, flattered, lionised for several weeks, he departed with the intimation that Philip would rather die a hundred deaths than suffer heresy, and the injunction that the Council should consult with a number of theologians and jurists whether some device could be hit upon for putting heretics out of the way, so as to lessen the popular glory of martyrdom. As to the reforms desiderated, the king had formed no decision in the meantime.

The conference of theologians came to the conclusion that the edicts must be adhered to, with some trifling variations in the punishments inflicted, according to the grade of offence. The edicts should thus remain in force, and all dubiety on this point was dispelled by a peremptory rescript from Philip (October 1565) denouncing death to heretics "as required by all law, human and divine," and commanding the inquisitors to smite and spare not. The canons of the Council of Trent, the edicts, the Inquisition, were accordingly proclaimed throughout the provinces, and every one knew definitely that his life was at the mercy of a fanatic bigotry, which in this matter knew no law but that of force. "Now we shall see the beginning of a fine tragedy," said William of Orange, grimly. He spake truly. Instantly a wave of indignation swept the land, bursting into vehement protest as it surged. The cities